



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT
NOVEMBER 18, 2020**

1. Roll Taking

Present: Commissioner Stephen Devoto
Commissioner Nick Fazzino
Commissioner Thom Pattavina
Commissioner Richard Pelletier
Commissioner Catherine Johnson
Commissioner James O'Connell
Commissioner Marcus Fazzino

Alternates: Commissioner Kellin Atherton
Commissioner Shanay Fulton
Commissioner Quatina Frazer

Staff: Marek Kozikowski

1a. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman

Commissioner Nick Fazzino nominates Stephen Devoto as Chairman. Commissioner Pattavina seconds the motion. Seeing no other nominations Marek Kozikowski calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

Vice-Chairman

Commissioner Devoto nominates Nick Fazzino as Vice-Chair. Commissioner O'Connell seconds the motion. Seeing no other nominations Marek Kozikowski calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

Secretary

Commissioner Fazzino nominates Thom Pattavina as Secretary. Commissioner O'Connell seconds the motion. Seeing no other nominations Marek Kozikowski calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

River-Cog Representative

Commissioner Fazzino nominates Catherine Johnson. Commissioner O'Connell seconds the motion. Stephen Devoto nominates Beth Emery as River-Cog Rep. Commissioner Pattavina seconds the motion.

Commissioner Devoto and Atherton spoke highly of Beth Emery. She has been representative to the River-Cog for many years and is much respected. She is a member of the Complete Streets Commission and is a former P&Z Commissioner.

Catherine Johnson stated that she has been a member of the Middlesex Regional Planning Agency. When she served on the Commission nine years ago she was part of the Congress Renewal Urbanism which is a professional organization dedicated to rebuilding cities.

A discussion ensued on the two nominations.

Seeing no other nominations Marek Kozikowski calls for the vote for Catherine Johnson. Commissioners N. Fazzino, O'Connell, Johnson and M. Fazzino vote in the affirmative. Commissioners Devoto, Pattavina and Pelletier vote nay. Motion failed at 4 to 3.

Marek Kozikowski calls for the vote for Beth Emery. Commissioners Devoto, Pelletier and Pattavina vote in the affirmative. Commissioners N. Fazzino, O'Connell, Johnson and M. Fazzino vote nay. Motion failed at 3 to 4.

Hearing no other nominations, Marek suggests tabling to the next meeting.

Marek asks for nominations for an alternate representative for the River Cog. Commissioner Pattavina nominates Kellin Atherton. Commissioner Pelletier seconds the nomination. Commissioner O'Connell said he would like to table this vote as they don't have a primary representative yet. Commissioner Johnson seconds. Marek asked Commissioner Pattavina if he would like to withdraw his nomination and he said no. Commissioner Atherton addressed the Commission and said that he is an active rep to the RiverCog and went to every meeting and feels he brought a different perspective as he is one of the youngest members and he would appreciate their vote. Commissioner O'Connell withdraws his motion to table the vote for an alternate member. Marek calls for the vote. Motion passes 6-1.

2. Items removed from the agenda and why

None

3. Public comment on items on agenda which are not currently scheduled for a public hearing

None

4. ZEO Certification that all public hearing signs have been properly noticed (when scheduled)

There were no public hearing signs required for the public hearing.

5. Public Hearings (when scheduled)

- 1. Review and adoption of the 2020 Middletown Plan of Conservation and Development. A copy of the proposed update is on file in the Office of the Town Clerk. Proponent P&Z Comm.**

John Guzkowski, Senior Planner with CHA Companies based in Storrs, CT stated that they were hired from the City of Middletown in 2018 to assist with the process of updating the POCD. He gave a presentation using slides of the updated POCD. Marek said they created this vision using public input, Commission input and the Steering Committee, of what they think and want to see what Middletown in 2030 would look like. The whole plan is focused on this vision; A Middletown that is thriving, vibrant, connected and sustainable. He went through each Chapter and explained in detail the goals and what they envision how Middletown would be to the year 2030.

Chairman Devoto suggests he would like to hear from the public first and continue the public hearing to the December meeting to give Marek some time for revisions and updates. There will be a five (5) minute rule for public speakers.

Jen Alexander of 110 Washington Street has lived downtown in the north end for the past 25 years. She agrees with a lot of the draft POCD, but right now she will speak of the items that she would like to comment on. She feels that a viability of the downtown that has retained its historic density and architecture and its purpose as the community center over time and is also racially and economically diverse. She would like the Commission to take a closer look if they made the argument about why our downtown is unique and matters and she would like it reflected in the plan. She said she was disappointed in two things. One was the focus on developing the corridors on South Main Street, Washington Street, Saybrook Road and Newfield Street. She would like to see the area closest to Main Street protected as it was with our forefathers. The second thing is the concession that the removal of the lights on Route 9 is a given. She thinks it's wise to wait and see as people are working from home. One of the barriers to success in the downtown is the historic racism and she would like to see more of that in this POCD for us to evaluate what kind of community this is for people of color. We should ask ourselves why people of color and descendants of immigrants would rather live in Glastonbury or Bloomfield than Middletown. What are we missing about making this an opportunity for us to thrive? She would like to see that addressed in the Plan.

Commissioner Johnson would like to respond to Jen about the corridors. She explained that she was the one who is promoting the development of the corridors. It differs slightly than how Jen perceived it. We aren't talking about competing with Main Street. We aren't even talking about bringing commercial to the corridors. It's about filling in all the empty spaces so we could have the neighborhood that are just in the back of those parcels tie in to the street. It would be great to slow down the traffic, put the trees back and just restore those streets as they were 100 years ago. We would customize each street to represent that.

Mr. McKenna of 149 Lincoln Street thanks everyone who worked on this POCD. There is a lot of vision in this and knows that it will be difficult to see this come all together. He wanted to comment on the (inaudible) the town has played with underserved communities (Native Americans and African Americans) and how the zoning has helped create segregation and inequity in the town. He feels that this is an opportunity to right some of those wrongs. He would like to see more affordable housing and mixed use development in areas outside of downtown so communities like Ferry Street does not have to be bussed to Farm Hill to meet Farm Hill's racial equity requirements. He's encouraged to see the inclusion of bike parking and trees, charging stations and accessory dwelling units. He requests the Commission take another look at on page 28 where they talked about developments that fits the character of the surrounding area. He notes that fitting in character has been used by many people for all the wrong reasons. They have often referred to the character of the residents of a structure as opposed to the character of the building itself and that has led to segregation and exclusion in many parts of the City.

Beth Emery of 36 West Poplar was on the Planning and Zoning and Advisory Committee. She thought everybody did a great job with the POCD. She said one of the things she would like to point out is identifying the photos in the POCD. There were quite a lot of building and water photos but was not sure which they were. She thought there should be more photos of people and the diversity of people like some in front of the buildings. There were pictures of the water but nobody is doing anything in them. They should include activities like the crew team in the pictures.

A discussion continued regarding closing the public hearing of tabling it.

Commissioner Johnson thinks the paragraphs of the four themes need to be rewritten. Commissioner O'Connell feels the point of the growth of Middletown would increase by 20% by 2030 is an outrageous and unrealistic statement since the Middletown has not only seen a decrease but the entire State of Connecticut saw a decrease. He also states that he knows that this POCD has been in process for a long time but feels the last 11 months of this plan has been ignored. There is clear indication that the structure of business has substantially changed and probably will never go back to what we experienced over the last couple of decades. Businesses have learned that work from home is viable and a cost-saving opportunity for them. Marek said the data for the 20% growth in CT comes from the State.

Commissioner Johnson moves to continue the public hearing to the next meeting. Commissioner Fazzino seconds the motion. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to continue the public hearing with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

6. Old Business

1. Request for a bond reduction for the Talia's Trail Subdivision off Mile Lane. Applicant/agent Tom Coccoomo S2013-4

Marek explained that the PCD Dept. received a request for a bond reduction from Mr. Coccoomo. The PCD and Public Works Departments have been working together to come up with an appropriate dollar figure to retain and do not have a figure yet. He recommends that the Commission tables this decision until the next meeting.

Commissioner N. Fazzino moved to table a request for a bond reduction for the Talia's Trail Subdivision off Mile Lane. Commissioner Pelletier seconded the motion. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to table with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

7. New Business

1. Extension request for and approved two-lot re-subdivision of property of Roger & Marylou Spurr at 88 Preston Street. Applicant/ Marylou Spurr. S2020-3

Marek explained that the Commission approved this subdivision on September 23rd to carve a new building lot. The owner has requested an extension of 90 days as they do not intend on starting the work or filing the mylar until spring. The extension would extend the recording of the Mylar to April 14, 2021.

Commissioner Pelletier moves for an extension for a two-lot re-subdivision of property of Roger & Marylou Spurr at 88 Preston Street. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson. . The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve the extension with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

2. Adoption of the 2021 Meeting Calendar

Commissioner O'Connell moves approval of the adoption of the 2021 meeting calendar. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

3. Request for a favorable G.S 8-24 Review for traffic easement at the four corners of Washington Street and Vine Street. Applicant/agent City of Middletown G.S. 8-24 2020-14

Marek explained the request.

Commissioner N. Fazzino moves to grant a favorable G.S 8-24 Review for traffic easement at the four corners of Washington Street and Vine Street. Seconded by Commissioner Pelletier. Commissioner Johnson would like to see the design. Commissioner O'Connell agrees because that is a very busy intersection. Commissioner Devoto said that the Commission just needs to make sure it is consistent with the POCD. This is supposedly to improve safety for pedestrians. Marek reminded the Commission that this is for the easement only. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

8. Public comment on topics which are not or have not been the subject of a public hearing

Beth Emery of 76 West Poplar Road would like to comment on the G.S. 8-24 Review. She is on the Complete Streets Committee and they were not in favor of the plans submitted to them. It will only be a two-way crosswalk. One side of Washington Street will not have a crosswalk. They attended the Public Works meeting and they left the meeting agreeing not to agree with the plans.

9. Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Transcripts, Staff Reports and Commission Affairs

1. Minutes of the October 28, 2020 meeting

Commissioner N. Fazzino moved to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Pelletier seconds the motion. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to approve with 7 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 7 affirmative votes.

2. River-Cog Report

Commissioner Atherton said that there has not been a meeting since the last report.

3. Staff Reports

None

4. Commission Affairs

Commissioner Devoto said that the City has formed a Charter Revision Committee. He also reminded the Commission that the State General Statutes say the P&Z Commission can have anywhere from five to nine members. The minority representation by the state rules that the maximum of one party for a seven member Commission could be five. Our City Statute specifies that the P&Z Commission has seven members and three alternates and it specifies that they can have no more than four members from one party. The state says a simple majority can pass decisions in Planning and Zoning. Middletown Charter says that a quorum consist of six commissioners and a decision can be taken by a vote of no more than five commissioners.

10. Adjournment

Commissioner Pattavina moves for adjournment at 9:15 PM. Commissioner O'Connell seconds the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marek Kozikowski, AICP
City Planner